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The role of language ideology in norm negotiation

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1. Introduction

Language ideology, a concept which has been developed mainly in linguistic anthropology, has become one of the key concepts in sociolinguistics as well. From the beginning of my encounter with language ideology (LI) and language management (LM) in the late 1990s, I have been thinking about how to link these two concepts (Kimura 2001, 2005). Jiří Nekvapil has displayed in one lecture on his last visit to Japan this March (March 11, 2011) just such a link. One of his aims in that lecture was "to find a 'place' for language ideologies in Language Management Theory" (Nekvapil 2011). And he concluded:

"Language ideologies represent a normative orientation for the speakers and thus underlie or guide what can be noticed as a deviation from the norm, what can be evaluated (negatively, positively or otherwise) and so forth, that is, management processes." (ibid.)

But at the very moment he finished the presentation, a big earthquake happened so that the issue could not be discussed. The aim of this paper is to continue the discussion.[1]

After a short review of the use of the term "ideology" within the language management framework, significant developments of language ideology research in linguistic anthropology are presented. Then we move on to examine a test case of organized LM in order to assess the role of language ideology in management processes. Finally, we will make suggestions for

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[1] This paper builds upon and develops the ideas about ideology and language management proposed in Kimura 2011a.

further research connecting language ideology with language management.

2. Language ideology (LI) in LMT (Language Management Theory)

So far, LI has been mentioned sporadically in LMT. As a recent example, Kon (2011) attempted to establish a link between LI and LMT, quoting also works from linguistic anthropology. But already J.V. Neustupný has used the term "ideology" repeatedly in his papers. Let's see one relatively early example, where he exceptionally dedicates one paragraph to "ideology".[2] In a paper on language purism (Neustupný 1989), Neustupný distinguishes three types of purism:

1. linguistic interaction: "what speakers actually do in discourse".
2. metalinguistic idiom: "*ways of communicating* about certain linguistic processes" (italic in the original).
3. ideology: "a relatively independent system of thought about language with particular political objectives to be achieved." Ideologies are thought to "accompany the correction processes". Eg. Nationalist ideology.

This understanding of ideology basically shares the assumptions with the notion of LI developed in linguistic anthropology, but is more specific and limited in scope, as the addition of "with particular political objectives to be achieved" indicates. In linguistic anthropology, LI is conceived as a more essential, omnipresent aspect of human language activities, to use Neustupný's words, "a relatively independent system of thought about language" which can be deduced from "linguistic interactions" as well as "metalinguistic idioms".

3. Language ideology in linguistic anthropology (cf. Kimura 2005, 2011b)

In a classical definition, Silverstein defines LI as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived structure and use." (1979: 193). In a later definition, LI are conceived to be "a mediating link between social forms and forms of talk" (Woolard 1998: 3).

The concept of language ideology starts from the basic insight that we all have value judgments about language. But language ideology as used in linguistic anthropology is not just another name for "language attitude" or "view of language". This concept assumes firstly that evaluations on language are not entirely different from situation to situation, but that

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[2] I am grateful to Muraoka Hidehiro, who made me aware of this paper and provided me with a copy of it.

there are recurrent patterns shared within a definite range of people.

A second characteristic of ideology is that it is linked to social structure, interests and power. But this does not mean that it attempts to explain language use directly from social structures and similar. Rather, the concept of LI is critical about tendencies that try to explain language use as a mere "reflection" of some kinds of social factors. LI should help to point out that social forms do not directly produce forms of talk. LI can be regarded as an interpretative filter with its own dynamism, mediating between society (in general) and concrete language usages. And it operates in two directions, as shown in figure 1.
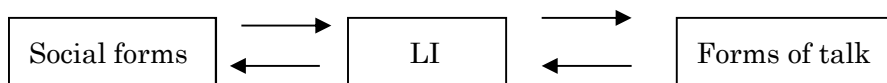

Figure 1

There may be some reservations within LM researchers to introduce such apparently macro-level concepts as language ideology to analyze management processes. But when we talk about norm negotiations, which is the theme of this conference, we have to be aware that norms are not negotiated from scratch with each and every interaction. Jernudd has pointed out that, "language management is inevitably constrained by the socioeconomic and political state of affairs in a speech community. It is important to be very clear about this constraint." (Jernudd 2001: 5). From this viewpoint, it is essential to keep such constraints in mind when examining the negotiation of norms. Woolard posits that LI are expected to be helpful here.

> "[I]t allows us to relate the microculture of communicative action to political economic considerations of power and social inequality, to confront macrosocial constraints on language behavior, and to connect discourse with lived experiences." (Woolard 1998: 27; see also Gal 1998)

4. The test case: the controversy on "prohibiting" Sorbian in the workplace

As a test case to connect LI and LM, we will now turn to the management process of language use at a workplace in the German-Sorbian bilingual area in the East of Germany. Sorbs are a Slavic people linving in Germany. Their number is estimated about 60000. In this area, where German-speaking and Sorbian-speaking people live together, German is usually regarded as the common language between Germans and Sorbians, but Sorbians use their mother tongue among themselves. Sorbs speak German without any problem, though the majority of Germans do not understand Sorbian. The population of Sorbs and Germans in the area and

workplace in which the 'incident' to be discussed now occurred, are roughly equal.

The discussion of the process is based on interviews with people directly involved, German and Sorbian newspaper articles and other related documents.

The case study addressed here involves the developments surrounding three notices (in the German language) posted on a staff bulletin board at a center for the disabled in the Sorbian region. The sequence of those notices is as follows:

'First notice' (27th November 2003)
Instruction: This is a reminder that German is the everyday language that must be used during working hours in the presence of disabled persons and non-Sorbian speaking staff.[3]

'Second notice' (7th June 2004)
Notification from the Center: Due to the occurrence of the situation in question, I would remind you that all staff must adhere to workplace regulations and particularly in relation to the direction issued on 27th Nov 2003. Any infringement on these regulations will have consequences under the Labour Law.[4]

'Third Notice' (22nd March 2005)
Notice: We would like to add the following to uphold the content of the notification of 27th November 2003 and workplace notice of 7th June 2004 in full force and effect:
'The everyday language of use during working hours should not directly or indirectly exclude any person present from communicating.'[5]

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[3] Original: Belehrung

Wiederholt weisen wir darauf hin, dass die Umgangssprache während des Dienstes in Gegenwart Behinderter und nicht sorbisch sprechender Mitarbeiter in deutscher Sprache zu führen ist.

[4] Original: Betriebsinformation

Aus gegebenem Anlass weise ich darauf hin, dass Dienstanweisungen insbesondere die vom 27.11.2003 durch alle im Unternehmen tätigen Mitarbeiter zu befolgen sind. Verstöße gegen Dienstanweisungen ziehen arbeitsrechtliche Konsequenzen nach sich.

[5] Original: Information

Die Belehrung vom 27. November 2003 und die Betriebsinformation vom 07. Juni 2004 behalten inhaltlich weiter ihre Gültigkeit und werden ergänzt durch den folgenden Wortlaut: „Die Umgangssprache während des Dienstes darf keinen Anwesenden von der direkten oder indirekten Kommunikation ausschließen."

Though the expressions and format of the notices differ, all three effectively stipulate that German is the language of the workplace. After the issue of the second notice, the notices were consecutively covered in the Sorbian media (television, newspapers and radio) as a prohibition of Sorbian, and prompted a series of protests against the center. Here we can extract two opposing sets of language management: By the employers on the one hand, and by protesting Sorbian organisations on the other.

For the employing corporation, the direct trigger was when a disabled resident of the center (a German) complained to the employer that Sorbian speaking staff members were talking in Sorbian in his/her presence. The use of Sorbian by staff was hence noted as a deviation, and evaluated negatively. Then an 'instruction' was issued against the deviation which constituted the adjustment procedure, and this was implemented using a notice (the first notice). A second notice with stronger expression was added after having remarked that Sorbian employees still talked in Sorbian when there were Germans nearby. After the raise of protests the third notice was posted to make the intent clearer and calm down the protests.

For the protesters, the first two notices, especially the threatening second notice was perceived as unacceptable, and the third only added oil to the fire. Finally, after several months the center removed the notices, while not officially renouncing their content. The tensions seem to have continued latently, but relaxed recently when the director of the center changed (2011). The new director, a German, made part of the first public greeting in Sorbian, showing comprehension and sympathy toward the Sorbs.

To understand why these two management processes emerged, let's have a look at language ideology. Here we have two quotations presenting the viewpoint of both sides. When the problem arose as a result of media coverage of the second notice, the person responsible from the employer's side is quoted in the newspaper saying 'at our center we would wish German to be the everyday language in communal areas for the sake of disabled persons and German colleagues at our center – so that everyone can understand everything.'[6] Here, while indicating the problem to be the use of Sorbian in the presence of Germans, the phrasing 'we would like ...' indicates the voluntary compromise on the part of the Sorbs to be the basis.

On the other hand, the Sorbian language television programme preview published in a local German newspaper gives the following critical introduction to the 'curious practices' of the center in question:

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[6] Original: W zajimje našich zbrašenych a němskich kolegow pak sej přeju, zo měła w zhromadnosći němčina wobchadna rěč być, zo by kóždy wšitko zrozumił. (*Serbske Nowiny* 2004.8.6)

'If speaking Sorbian amongst themselves, Sorbs almost always switch to German when a German enters the scene. At XX [center name] this is not simply an act of politeness, but something that is carried out under strict instructions. (...) Those who violate this instruction will face the consequences under the Labour Law.'[7]

What is regarded as a problem from this side is that what is performed as an act of politeness is demanded to be reworked into an obligation.

These "metalinguistic idioms" (to use Neustupný's wording) have two components in common. On the one hand, German is accepted not only as the common language between Germans and Sorbs, but using Sorbian in the presence of someone who does not speak Sorbian is considered impolite (even if that person is not part of the conversation). On the other hand, as the term "politeness" implies, the Sorbs essentially have the right and freedom to speak Sorbian among themselves. This concept of "politeness", implying the voluntary character of the use of the German language by the Sorbs in front of Germans, can be regarded the equilibrium point of different interests in the region, performing as a basic language ideology shared by Sorbs and Germans.[8]

In our case, we can understand the management processes displayed here in terms of a struggle over the construction of norms of language usage within this particular workplace. The German staff felt uneasy towards Sorbs speaking their own language – a language German staff do not understand. But prohibiting Sorbian cannot be justified according to the ideology of "politeness". Hence the employers tried to emphasize one aspect of "politeness", namely that Sorbs should use German, in order to establish the norm of using German in the workplace. Sorbian employees and their supporters, on the other hand, while accepting that they are expected to use Sorbian in the presence of Germans, stressed the other aspect of "politeness", namely that it is the free decision of Sorbian speakers to switch into German, in order to let the freedom to use Sorbian in the workplace acknowledged. The prescription to use German was regarded as a violation of the equilibrium for coexistence.

Both sides were trying to adjust the norm in their own interests based on the mutually agreed language ideology of "politeness". This shows how shared language ideologies can role as constraints, but also as resources in processes negotiating norms. We could assume that

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[7] Original: Wenn Sorben sich unterhalten und ein Deutscher hinzutritt, wird meistens in die deutsche Sprache gewechselt. Im XX geschieht dies jedoch nicht nur aus reiner Höflichkeit, sondern auf strikte Anweisung (...). Wer sich der Anweisung widersetzt, dem drohen arbeitsrechtliche Konsequenzen." (*Sächsische Zeitung* 2004.8.5)

[8] On the concept of politeness in the German-Sorbian context, see Kimura 2005.

norms would not work without reference to shared LI and perhaps even go further to assert that norms would not work without reference to LI which are accepted by the participants.

5. Conclusions

Thus this paper suggests that language ideology can fruitfully be connected to language management processes. Regarding further research, it can be assumed that language ideology can essentially contribute to clarify *why* such kind of management processes arise, while investigating language management can help to explore *how* language ideologies operate.

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